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BYZANZ UND DAS ABENDLAND IV.
STUDIA BYZANTINO-OCCIDENTALIA

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Dates or Narrative? Looking for Structures in Middle Byzantine Historiography (9th to 11th Century)*

1.

Literary genres in Byzantine historiography appear to be a neglected topic in modern research. Since Hans-Georg Beck published his reflections on what he called the “Byzantine monk-chronicle” more than 60 years ago,¹ only few scholars have taken the trouble of addressing this issue along general lines. There is in fact no modern overall study on their *proimias* that goes beyond the general observations made by Heinrich Lieberich at the very beginning of the 20th century.² Despite that, curiously enough, ‘chronicle’ or ‘history’ continue to be terms used in contemporary publications for referring to Byzantine historical works, probably because of the lack of alternatives. However, as these terms have lost most of the connotations they had formerly for defining historical genres, they appear even in some cases to be interchangeable in the use modern scholars give to them.

As an expression of this situation one can refer to the recent book by Warren Treadgold on the middle Byzantine historians,³ where the category of ‘history’ is expanded to cover works such as the *Library* of Photios or the *Historical*

* This study has been made possible by funding provided by the Spanish research project FFI2015-65118-C2-1-P.

¹ BECK, H.-G., Zur byzantinischen ‘Mönchschronik’. In: BAUER, C. et alii (eds.), *Speculum Historiale. Geschichte im Spiegel von Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsdeutung (Festschrift für Johannes Spörl aus Anlaß seiner 60. Geburtstag)*. Freiburg im Breisgau 1965, 188–197. (repr. in BECK, H.-G., *Ideen und Realitäten in Byzanz. Gesammelte Aufsätze*. London 1972, XVI.)

² LIEBERICH, H., *Studien zu den Proömien in der griechischen und byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung. II. Teil. Die byzantinischen Geschichtsschreiber und Chronisten*. München 1900.

³ TREADGOLD, W., *The Middle Byzantine Historians*. Houndmills (Basingstoke) 2013.

excerpts of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, and is applied accordingly both to ‘true’ historians and to chroniclers (this latter word being also used by Treadgold for authors such as George Synkellos or Theophanes). In fact, Treadgold’s book appears to have resigned to a definition of historiographical writing by means of medieval categories and simply researches texts that this scholar considers to display an overview of historical events. This plain approach is, however, not so simple as the author considers and bears with it also some risks, as is always the case when applying modern expectations to medieval categories without further reflection. Let us mention briefly two instances of how Treadgold’s procedure can be misleading.

In the final pages of his book, Treadgold (pp. 468–478) deals with “the histories” and considers their distribution “by types” (p. 469, the word “genre” being perhaps avoided as too compromising?). Among other things, the author writes that: *the middle Byzantine histories include just one biography*, *The Life of Basil* (p. 470). This assertion strikes the reader of middle Byzantine histories, for, as is known, the structure of many of these works is to a great extent biographical, the emperor being at the centre of the narrative. This is somehow recognised by the very title of Psellos’ history, whose object, as the preserved title very precisely says, are the πράξεις τῶν βασιλέων; a circumstance that was not ignored by Sewter when he published the text as *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers* in the Penguin paperbacks, making it a collection of biographies.⁴ This is by no way a minor point because (imperial) biography provides a structure for narratives in middle Byzantine historical writing so that the *Life of Basil* cannot be understood if considered rather an exception. In fact, what could make the *Life of Basil* an exception is the fact that it adhered more strictly to the rules of the classical *genre* of biography, but this is an approach Treadgold should in fact not follow by his own standards. This is however what he actually does when he writes still in p. 470, some lines after the quotation mentioned above, that (stress mine): *Middle Byzantine historians also showed so much interest in the emperor’s lives that most of their histories resemble a series of imperial biographies, although only the Life of Basil is formally biographical*. Now, if we admit with him that biography is in fact a ‘type’ of historical writing, why did Treadgold not admit hagiographical writing in his detailed overview? Certainly, many hagiographies do not reflect historical reality, as they belong rather to

⁴ SEWTER, E. R. A., *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: the Chronographia of Michael Psellus*. London 1966. See also SIGNES CODOÑER, J., *Miguel Pselo. Vidas de los emperadores de Bizancio*. Madrid 2005.

escapist (see the life of Theodoros of Edessa in the 9th century)⁵ or to edifying or pious literature. But what about the series of biographies of the Byzantine patriarchs written in the 9th and early 10th century, which are major *historical sources* of the period?⁶ Obviously they adopt a partisan view of the events, but did not Byzantine chroniclers do the same thing? All these works are also historiographical writings and should have been reviewed in Treadgold's book, but he apparently excluded them from it because they belonged to other *genres*. As we see, his approach is not that clear-cut as it presents itself and greatly distorts the perception of historical writing.

But even assuming that Treadgold made a necessary selection of Byzantine 'historians' to deal with in his book, his analysis of the texts is based mainly on content and sources (and also on the biographies of their authors) and tends to consider historical writing as a kind of single *metier*, completely disregarding differences of *genre*, which are not only dependent on language, but also on structures. Let us consider what he writes about how George Synkellos considered his task as historian:

George must have found the problem to organize his Selection intractable. His almost unattainable ideal was to write a coherent text without sacrificing the precision of direct quotations and tabular presentation, which chroniclers had favored ever since Eusebius' Chronicle. Even today, with a long tradition of historical writing to provide guidance and models, modern scholars who finish their histories often fail to produce prose that is simultaneously readable, precise, and accurate. Reconciling the conflicting demands of a narrative history and a reference work has always been especially difficult. The easiest and most obvious means of

⁵ SIGNES CODOÑER, J., Lust am Erzählen. Heiligenviten als Grundlage der Geschichtschreibung im 10. Jahrhundert und der Weg nach Bagdad. In: ODORICO, P. – AGAPITOS, P. A. – HINTERBERGER, M. (eds.), *L'écriture de la mémoire. La littéralité de l'historiographie. Actes du IIIe Colloque International philologique, Nicosie, 6-7-8 mai 2004*. Paris 2006, 85–105.

⁶ For biography as one genre among others in hagiographic writings, see now the clarifying taxonomy drawn by HINTERBERGER, M., Byzantine Hagiography and its Literary Genres: Some Critical Observations. In: EFTHYMIADIS, ST. (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*. Farnham 2014, 25–60, esp. 29–32. For the biographies of early ninth century as a historical source, see LILIE, R.-J., *Die Patriarchen der ikonoklastischen Zeit. Germanos I. – Methodios I. (715-847)*. Frankfurt am Main 1999. The influence of hagiography on historical writing is also to be taken into account by the use of hagiographical sources by historians, as is the case of the Continuator of Theophanes (see SIGNES CODOÑER, J., *El periodo del segundo iconoclasmo en Theophanes Continuatus*. Amsterdam 1995).

making George's text flow more smoothly would have been to omit or to paraphrase most or all of his quotations and lists. Yet such a drastic simplification, as George himself surely saw, would greatly have reduced the value of the Selection as a source both of historical information and of excerpts of lost texts, not just for us but for Byzantine readers as well. If George had lived to revise and complete his Selection, it would probably have had fewer repetitions and inconsistencies but much the same format and style. Though his unrevised Selection largely fails both as scholarship and as literature, the failure remains an honorable and instructive one. In fact, like some modern scholars, many Byzantine readers seem to have been favorably impressed by a work that was almost unintelligible but full of erudite references to obscure secondary literature, on the principle that the unintelligibility must be a sign of the author's superior intelligence.⁷

Leaving aside for now the somehow surprising identification of modern and medieval historians, who are both considered as being subject to the same objectives and expectations, the passage also blurs the limits between chronicle and history in as far as Treadgold seems to consider a 'chronicle', such as the one conceived by Synkellos, as the preparatory step for the writing of a 'history'. Treadgold thinks in fact that *to write a coherent text* or produce a *narrative history* must have been the final aim of Synkellos, who apparently fell short of it because he did not want *to sacrifice the precision of direct quotations*. This modern re-interpretation of Synkellos' aims and ideals, besides being based on Treadgold's own methodological assumptions of what modern historical writing should be, does not rely on evidence.⁸ Certainly, we are always told that classicist 'history' (characterised by a continuous narrative and the use of Classical Greek) was somehow considered superior than the 'chronicle', but we must not take for granted that chroniclers thought in the same way, considering for instance the pride George the Monk took in his own work.

As a matter of fact, if there was some sort of continuity between history and chronicle as genres, it was not necessarily in the hierarchical sense advanced by Treadgold, but in the combination of methods and structures that changed

⁷ TREADGOLD (n. 3) 63.

⁸ See SIGNES CODOÑER, J., *The Emperor Theophilos and the East (829-842). Court and Frontier in Byzantium during the Last Phase of Iconoclasm*. (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies 13) Aldershot 2014, 7., where I characterise Treadgold's method as *producing a coherent narrative out of the data taken from the sources by relegating to lengthy footnotes the discussion of the textual problems*.

along with the historical circumstances. Treadgold considers, for instance, that the subjects of histories in Late Antiquity and the middle Byzantine period *were more similar to each other than different* (p. 470), although he argues that the main reason for Church history as such ceasing to be written in the later period was *that the affairs of the Church and State had become so closely intertwined that historians found it natural to treat them both together*. Nevertheless, this supposed combination of profane and religious subject matter does not appear first among middle Byzantine historians, but it is already characteristic of some Late antique *histories*, either so-called ‘Church *histories*’ written after Eusebios by Christians (such as Sokrates and Sozomenos)⁹ or ‘Classical *histories*’ written by Pagans (such as Eunapios and Zosimos). This is no wonder, for the clash between Pagans and Christians for the control of the State was a central *topic* of classical historiography from the 4th to 6th centuries, whereas the final triumph of Christianity over Paganism in the reign of Justinian made this combined polemical approach superfluous (if not dangerous) for historians. It is therefore in the search for exhaustiveness that we find in some Late antique chronicles (such as Malalas) that we must look for a precedent of the occasional mention of Church affairs in the middle Byzantine ‘historians’ mentioned by Treadgold. In fact, when he gives examples of middle Byzantine works dealing with both Church and State affairs, he refers mainly to chronicles such as those of Theophanes, Synkellos and George the Monk. On the other hand,

⁹ I find very compelling the definition of the genre of Church history made by VAN NUFFELEN, P., *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène*. (*Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta* 142) Leuven 2004, 214. on the basis of the works of Sokrates and Sozomenos (stress mine): *C'est une histoire traitant des événements ayant trait à l'Église en tant que sphère sociale, qui se réfère formellement à l'historiographie classique... et substantiellement à l'historiographie chrétienne*. Other Church histories of Late antiquity are more centred on polemics and closely follow the Eusebian model, so that even their consideration as ‘histories’ from the point of view of genre is problematic. This is the case of the work of the Arrian Philostorgios, which Photios, *Library* cod. 40 considered not a history, but an eulogy of heretics (ὡς εἶναι τὴν ἱστορίαν αὐτοῦ μὴ ἱστορίαν μᾶλλον ἀλλ’ ἐγκώμιον μὲν τῶν αἰρετικῶν, ψόγον δὲ γυμνὸν καὶ κατηγορίαν τῶν ὀρθοδόξων) or the history of Gelasios of Kyzikos, which is titled σύνταγμα and whose second book deals mainly with the development of the Nicaean council. See SIGNES CODOÑER, J., La historiografía en el Oriente del imperio romano desde el saco de Roma por Alarico hasta las invasiones árabes. *Cuadernos de literatura griega y latina* 4 (2003) 115–172 and MARASCO, G., The Church historians (II): Philostorgius and Gelasius of Cyzicus. In: MARASCO, G. (ed.), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity: Fourth to Sixth Century A.D.* Leiden – Boston 2003, 258–288. For an overview on Church historiography and its influence on ‘secular’ history, see also WHITBY, M., Imperial Christian Historiography. In: FELDHER, A. – HARDY, G. (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, Vol. 1, *Beginnings to AD 600*. Oxford 2011, 346–371.

however, the interest for Church affairs in most Byzantine chronicles (with the exception of George Synkellos) was already questioned by Beck, who noticed, for instance, that Theophanes describes in just 12 lines the council of Nicaea of 787, the most significant event of the period from the point of view of the Church.¹⁰ Church affairs obviously appear also in middle Byzantine histories, but even less frequently and mostly related to the figures of the patriarchs or to internal crises of the State, as in the iconoclastic period: as the Church has become an integral part of the State it rarely deserves independent treatment. As we see, the situation is more complex than Treadgold pretends and we should not approach historiographical works as closed genres determined by historical events but rather as complex codes which were transformed by historians according to their necessities.

This does not mean, however, that we should dispose of the literary genres as a valid instrument of analysis because of their elusive nature and ever changing characteristics (the so-called “madness of genre”).¹¹ On the contrary, precisely because of this formal complexity, we should pay more attention to structures and forms than to content when assessing historical works by their literary codes. Genres, as Rhetoric, are not popular terms nowadays in Byzantine studies when dealing with literature, probably as a reaction against the traditional narrow-sided approach that prevailed until recently and that made Byzantine literature slavishly dependent on a series of defined sets of rules inherited from Classical Antiquity.¹² This approach is certainly wrong and has to do with manuals such as the one written by Herbert Hunger, in which the classification by genres traces dividing lines among works of a period and becomes an obstacle for appreciating the changes, the real *history* of the Byzantine literature. But codes existed as much as the omnipresent Rhetoric and the subtle ways the Byzantine appropriated them must come back to the fore if we want to understand Byzantine historical writing. Based on this premise, I will consider now briefly some possible defining marks of historical genres in their transformation from Antiquity to the middle Byzantine

¹⁰ BECK (n. 1) 195.

¹¹ MULLETT, M., Madness of genre. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992) 233–243.

¹² Other terms, such as “aesthetics”, seem to have gained momentum among modern scholars, but the studies done bearing this concept in mind are in general non-systematic approaches centred on stylistic dimensions of cultural-historical values, but not on structures. See, for instance, PAPAIOANNOU, ST., The Aesthetics of History: from Theophanes to Eustathios. In: MACRIDES, R. (ed.), *History as Literature in Byzantium*. Farnham 2010, 3–21., who reflects on the aesthetics of the past in historical Byzantine works.

period. As announced in the title, dating and narrative structures will centre my approach.

2.

Hans-Georg Beck made the following distinction between histories and chronicles in the Byzantine literature:

*Die Hauptunterschiede sind im allgemeinen, daß die Historiker sich eher auf einen festumrissenen zeitlichen Abschnitt der byzantinischen Geschichte beschränken und dabei sich das annalistische Element in den Hintergrund drängen im Interesse einer kontinuierlichen Darstellung der einzelnen sachlichen Phasen einer Regierungszeit. Ferner die Tatsache, daß die Historiographie sprachlich näher der sogenannten Reinsprache als einem volkstümlichen Idiom steht und damit auch den rhetorischen Schmuck, die klassische Reminiszenz und die Anlehnung an klassische Vorbilder der Historiographie mehr pflegt als die Chronistik, die darüber teilweise souverän hinweggeht.*¹³

According to Beck, the classicist history dealt with events of a limited period of time (*festumrissene zeitliche Abschnitte*), used continuous narratives for exposing them (*kontinuierliche Darstellung*) and expressed itself via the Classical Greek (*Reinsprache*) and the ancient Rhetoric (*rhetorischer Schmuck*). This inevitably means that the chronicle should be characterised by the opposite criteria. To express it in the words used by Steven Runciman thirty years later, the chronicle provided *a history of the world, recorded facts without comments* (that is, without a continuous or all-embracing narrative frame) and *was written in colloquial language*.¹⁴ This tripartite characterisation of the two genres became somehow canonical through its acceptance by Hunger in his influential handbook,¹⁵ and has not been seriously challenged until now.

¹³ BECK (n. 1) 196-197.

¹⁴ RUNCIMAN, ST., *Historiography*. In: LITTLEWOOD, A. R. (ed.), *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music*. Oxford 1995, 59-66, here p. 60.

¹⁵ HUNGER, H., *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*. I. München 1978, 252-254. Notice, however, that Hunger, following closely Beck's definition, combined the two first characteristics (concerning time and narrative) into a single one: *Darstellung eines bewußt gewählten, begrenzten Abschnittes der byzantinischen Geschichte mit ausgewogenen Aufbau gegenüber annalistisch aufgemachten Abrissen der Weltgeschichte von Adam bis zur jeweiligen Gegenwart*.

Nevertheless, modern scholars seem to avoid, as far as possible, referring to it and use instead the terms ‘chronicle’ or ‘history’ in a vague and imprecise way, as does Treadold. In fact, they seem to follow the *caveats* already advanced by Beck, who thought *daß der Unterschied zwischen der Gattung Chronistik und Historiographie viel geringer ist, als gewöhnlich angenommen wird*.¹⁶ On the contrary, other differences that Beck deemed “not significant” (*unwesentlichen Grades*), such as the social milieu of the writers, readerships and audiences, religion or mirabilia, have been the object of much attention in modern research. Recently, only Paul Magdalino has come back to the problem and produced a list of detailed characteristics of the genres of history and chronicle for the period of 900–1400 that he checks against the preserved historical works.¹⁷ He finds that some texts clearly deviate from this bipartite characterisation or fall between these two categories, thus confirming that the scheme, in the simple approach made until now, is in urgent need of revision.

As Magdalino, I will now check this tripartite characterisation of Byzantine history vs. chronicle against the evidence provided by some Byzantine ‘historians’ of the middle Byzantine period (9th to 11th century), with special reference to the so-called *Continuation of Theophanes*. I will only slightly change the first characteristic of the three, and consider that chronicles and histories do not only differ with regard to the *period of time* they record, but also in the way they approach it, that is, *autopsy* is an element that must be assessed in every categorisation of the historical writings, in the idea that it opposes the predominant and systematic use of written second-hand sources as practised by the chroniclers, who report and record events of a long distant past.

¹⁶ BECK (n. 1) 197. RUNCIMAN (n. 14) is one of the few scholars to apply these two categories in a very rigid way, classifying the historical works in two blocks either as chronicles or as histories and making bold assumptions such as that chronicles *did not rank as literature and few of them contributed much to historical knowledge*. More prudent is the approach of HUNGER (n. 15) 253–254: *Trotz der offenkundigen Gegensätzlichkeit zwischen Historikern und Chronisten bereitet die Einordnung mancher Autoren unter diesem Gesichtspunkt Schwierigkeiten*. LJUBARSKIJ, J., *Quellenforschung and/or Literary Criticism. Narrative Structures in Byzantine Historical Writing*. *Symbolae Osloenses* 75 (1988) 5–73., distorts the matter when he writes on p. 11 that Beck argued *that there was no real difference between the two genres of chronicle and history*, for Beck recognised the differences, but warned against drawing rigid lines between genres. This is the approach we will follow in the present paper.

¹⁷ MAGDALINO, P., *Byzantine Historical Writing, 900–1400*. In: FOOT, S. – ROBINSON, CH. F. (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*. Vol. 2. 400–1400. Oxford 2012, 218–237.

The table would be as follows:

HISTORY	CHRONICLE
1. autopsy > contemporary events	1. written sources > ancient and contemporary events
2. learned Greek > small audience	2. koine Greek > broad audience
3. thematic arrangement > single narrative and argument	3. chronological frame > yearly sequence

In order to characterise the historical works of the period it seems expedient to proceed by way of comparison with the Late antique models, for they provide a good starting point for middle Byzantine historians. As the distinction between histories and chronicles in Late Antiquity seems more fundamental than in the later period (as we shall see below) it appeared to me a good idea to always start our comparison of the three criteria with the two most prototypical representatives of Late Antiquity historiography: Prokopios for classical history and John Malalas for the chronicle, and then proceed to the middle Byzantine historians. However, where appropriate other late antique historians will also be taken into account. The criteria applied, although apparently clear-cut, will show significant grey or intermediate zones, so that the result will also necessarily be a more complex taxonomy of the historiographical genres than the simple binary distinction consecrated in the tradition. This is in fact in accordance with the varied titles preserved in the historic works themselves.

3.

Concerning the first criterion, autopsy,¹⁸ it is evident that it applies to Prokopios, who took part as *adessor* in the campaigns of Belisarios, but not to Malalas, not only because his is a universal chronicle since the day of Creation, but also because he based on sources even for contemporary events. A confirmation

¹⁸ Into this criterion we subsume three different characteristics listed by MAGDALINO (n. 17) 223. in order to define 'history' vs. 'chronicle'. According to him history *covers recent Byzantine history, from about a generation prior to the author's lifetime, is written from the author's own experience and the oral evidence of other eye-witnesses: occasionally also from contemporary writings and presents intrusion of the author into the narrative*, whereas the chronicle *covers the history of the world from the Creation (normally dated to 5500 years before the birth of Christ), with Byzantine history as a continuation of Roman history, has information taken mainly from older histories and chronicles, which are collated, excerpted, summarised, or incorporated with minor editing, and his narrative (is) almost entirely impersonal.*

that the use of the sources indeed makes a distinction between the two authors' works is the different demands required from their respective editors: Malalas needs much more work, for one must combine the analysis of the variants of the manuscripts (Textual Criticism) with the study of the sources on which Malalas was dependant (Quellenforschung). The problem repeats itself time and again in the historiographical tradition. Chronicles are usually unpleasant to editors, in as far as they are open works to which later authors felt free to make additions and changes.¹⁹ Someone could argue that Prokopios also used written sources and this is certainly the case of the *Secret History* and, prominently, the book *On Buildings*, but also of the *History of the Wars*. The difference with Malalas is, however, that Prokopios took mainly *data* from the sources (for instance from laws or official texts) but did not copy their wording, as these sources contained no narratives, whereas Malalas, who built up his chronicle mostly from previous historical sources, respected their wording as he copied them as independent reports and did not think of integrating them into a wider narrative, as Prokopios did.

That autopsy was somehow felt to be linked with Classicist history is perhaps corroborated by the fact that the authors of the only two historical works of our period (9th–11th centuries), which are titled *ιστορία* without a further adjective, refer to autopsy in their prologues in such an emphatic way that autopsy becomes almost the main characteristic of their historical method. I refer to the *Histories* of Leo the Deacon²⁰ and Michael Attaliates, who both dealt with contemporary events they witnessed for the most part.²¹

Different is the case of the works composed by patriarch Nikephoros and Psellos, which both have the title of *ιστορία σύντομος*, “short history”, for in these two cases the adjective *σύντομος* modifies the sense of the substantive *ιστορία* and makes the works some kind of “abbreviated history”, that is, a “breviary” or “compendium” and, consequently, a derivative work. In fact, sources which dealt with the distant past are compiled and excerpted in both texts.

¹⁹ In the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies held in Belgrade in 2016 a round table was convened by Z. Farkas and L. Horváth on 25th August with the title “Byzantine world chronicle as open text” where several speakers addressed this issue from different perspectives (summaries of the interventions are to be found in the web page of the congress, <http://byz2016.rs>).

²⁰ HASE, K.B., *Leonis diaconi Caloënsis historiae libri decem*. Bonn 1828, 1,1: τὰ δὲ τούτων ἐχόμενα, καὶ ὅσα ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ αὐτὸς τεθέαμαι (εἶπερ ὀφθαλμοὶ ὧτων πιστότεροι, καθ' Ἡρόδοτον), τὰ δὲ καὶ πρὸς τῶν ἰδόντων ἠκρίβωσα, ταῦτα καὶ δῶσω γραφῆ.

²¹ PÉREZ MARTÍN, I., *Miguel Atalates. Historia*. (Nueva Roma 15) Madrid 2002, 5–6: διὸ δὲ ἔδοξε κάμοι... μικρὰ ἅττα διαλαβεῖν βραχεῖ τινι ῥήματι καὶ ἀπλοικῶ, καθὰ προσήκει τοῖς ἱστορίαις συγγραφοῦσι, ὅτι... ἱστορικὸς... περὶ ὧν... αὐτὸς αὐτόπτης καὶ θεατῆς ἐχημάτια.

The sense is similar to the σύνοψις ἱστοριῶν, “synopsis of histories”, of John Skylitzes or the ἐπιτομή ἱστοριῶν, “epitome of histories”, of John Zonaras: we are dealing here with derivative works based on previous “histories”, but not with proper “histories”, for, again, they do not deal with the present, but with a distant past.²² That they continue using the word ἱστορία for their works is not as important for classifying them as the fact that this word is used along with other terms which specify its meaning. We should not forget that the term ἱστορία is ambiguous and refers both to the discipline devoted to the study of the past and to a specific historiographical genre that assumes this task.

What about then a work such as the *Continuation of Theophanes*? To begin with, as the author deals with a more or less distant past, he refers in the prologue only, as is to be expected, to oral and written sources, but not to autopsy. However, he appears at the same time to consider his work as a history, despite using the term χρονογραφία in the title.²³ In fact, the author refers to ‘history’ in his prologue, not only when he alludes in a general way to “the virtue of history” (τοῦ τῆς ἱστορίας... καλοῦ), but also when he mentions the starting point of his narrative as “the beginning of (this) history” (ἀρχὴν... τῆς ἱστορίας) or when he considers that his work completes the work of Theophanes and “sets forth *this* history in full body” (αὐτὴν τε τῆν ἱστορίαν ὀλόσωμον). Besides that he uses thrice the verb ἱστορέω in the prologue.²⁴

The same thing happens with Genesisios. The work is usually referred to as βασιλεία for the use of this word in the incipit of some books, but the author refers to it in the prologue as a “historical book” (βιβλῶ τῆ ἱστοροῦση). The dedicatory poem that precedes the prologue presents the work also as a “book of history” (τὴν ἐξ ἱστορίας... βιβλῶν).²⁵ Although the author deals with distant past and refers to ancient sources, he apparently sees no problem in considering his work a history.

However, one must be very careful as the meaning of the term ἱστορία in the middle Byzantine period is concerned, for we see that it was also used in a very general way by Constantine VII to refer to the works of Malalas, Theophanes

²² TREADGOLD (n. 3) 471. also uses the term and distinguishes between “primarily original” and “primarily derivative” histories, but his list of the works (note 63) does not reflect the complexities of historical writing we are considering here.

²³ FEATHERSTONE, M. J. – SIGNES CODOÑER, J., *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur libri I-IV*. Berlin 2015, 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.* I prooem. 4, 24-25, 33 for the references to ἱστορία and 15, 16, 21 for the verb ἱστορέω.

²⁵ LESMÜLER-WERNER, A – THURN, L., *Iosephi Genesisii regum libri quattuor*. Berlin 1978, 3,3, 18.

and George the Monk.²⁶ However, χρονική also appears as a modifier of the term ιστορία when these works are referred to in Constantine's excerpts²⁷ and Theophanes is labelled as a χρονικόν in *De administrando imperio* 17.1 and 21.1, whereas the term ιστορία, when it is applied to classical historians, never gets further precision. It appears as if the term ιστορία had been expanded to cover all historical works of any kind, as a kind of substitute for χρονογραφία; a term that is completely absent from Constantine's works, the only exception being precisely the preserved title of the *Continuation of Theophanes*.

Why did authors so different as Theophanes, his Continuator, Psellos and even the copyists or authors of some derivative versions of the Logothete's chronicle also use the term χρονογραφία for referring to their works?²⁸ The term was used in Antiquity in the plural for referring to *annals* or in the singular to refer to reckoning methods, but not particularly for world Christian *chronicles*. However, it appears to have been popularised in the middle Byzantine period for referring to every kind of historical work dealing with the past, without further connotation.²⁹ If precision was needed, the term χρονικόν was available for referring to world chronicles,³⁰ but what term could be used to refer unambiguously to histories based on autopsy? As we have already seen, ιστορία was used by certain historians in this sense (Leo the Deacon and Michael Attaliates), but its meaning had also been expanded and desemanticised by

²⁶ For Theophanes as ιστορία, see MORAVCSIK, GY. – JENKINS, R. J. H., *Constantine Porphyrogenitus de administrando imperio*. Washington 1967, 21,35 25,1; for George the Monk as ιστορία see *De virtutibus et vitiis* (ed. T. BÜTTNER-WOBST – A.G. ROOS) vol. 1. 156,24, 157,1, *De insidiis* (ed. C. DE BOOR) 176,21 and *De legationibus* (ed. C. DE BOOR) 4.22; and for Malalas as ιστορία see *De virtutibus et vitiis* vol. 1. 2,30, 157,1, 163,20, 164,1 and *De insidiis* 58,22, 151,2, 176,18, 206,5.

²⁷ *De virtutibus et vitiis* vol. 1. 2,30, 122,24, 164,1; *De legationibus* 6,23; *De insidiis* 190,24.

²⁸ Malalas' works usually receive the title of χρονογραφία among modern scholars and this name appears even in the front page of the edition of Thurn, I., *Ioannis Malalae chronographia*. Berlin – New York 2000, 1. (ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΜΑΛΑΛΑ ΧΡΟΝΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ), but the manuscripts use ἐγκύκλιον or ἐκλογή τῶν χρονικῶν for the title of the work (*ibid.* 3). The use of χρονογραφία for the work is therefore unattested and should be not used to avoid confusion.

²⁹ ΚΑΖΗΔΑΝ, Α., Der Mensch in der byzantinischen Literaturgeschichte, *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 28 (1979) 1–21, here 3 already pointed that the best histories were called χρονογραφία or χρονική διήγησις. See more recently BURGESS, R. W. – KULIKOWSKI, M., The historiographical position of John Malalas. Genres in Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Middle Ages. In: MEIER, M. – RADTKI, CH. – SCHULZ, F. (eds.), *Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas*. Stuttgart 2016, 93–117, here 94–96.

³⁰ The most typical “Monk chronicle” of the period, that of George the Monk, was titled χρονικόν, as the original version (A) of the Logothete.

Constantine VII. Therefore, historians should lay hand on periphrases to carefully describe the nature of their work. Accordingly, one of the most famous Byzantine classicist histories, that of Michael Psellos, is preserved also under the title of *χρονογραφία*. This substantive is explained through the participial phrase *ιστοροῦσα τὰς πράξεις τῶν βασιλέων*, so that taking the whole expression together, reference is made to the supposed genres of *chronography*, *history* and *biography* without a solution of continuity. In the case of the Continuator, the substantive *χρονογραφία* is now determined by the participle *συγγραφεῖσα* related to the noun *συγγραφεύς*, which is used to refer to classicist historians, such as Thucydides.³¹ This strange use of the term can perhaps be explained, at least in the case of the *Continuation*, by the circumstance that it was supposed to continue the *χρονογραφία* of Theophanes. Curiously, the previous work by Synkellos bears the title *ἐκλογὴ χρονογραφίας*, not just *χρονογραφία*, as if this last word would not imply *per se* the selection or compilation of sources we usually take for granted in a chronicle.³²

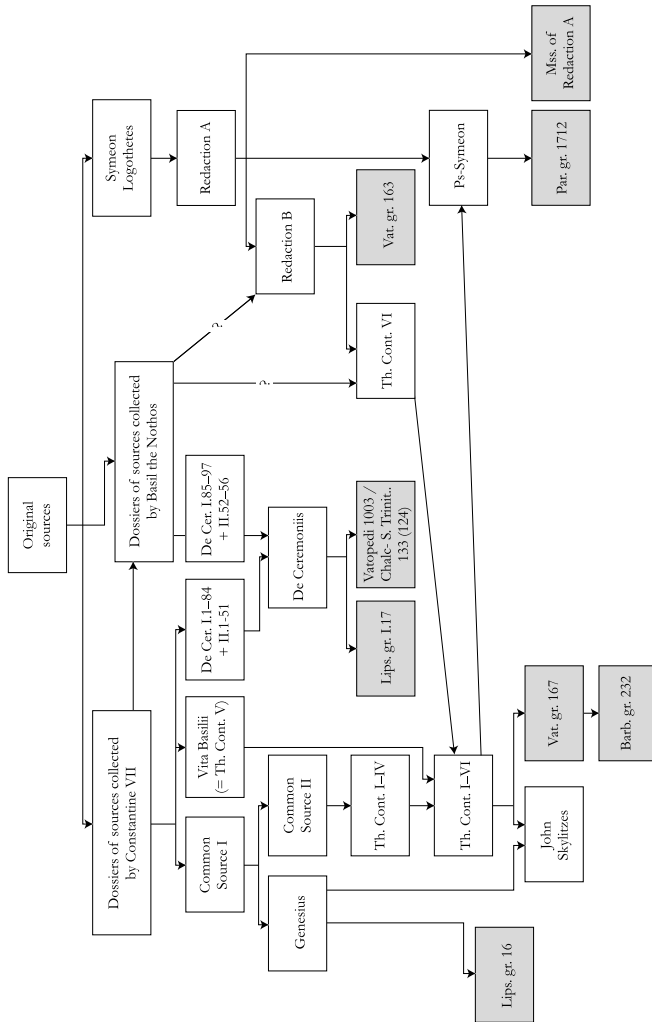
Once we have established that the use of terms such as *χρονογραφία* or *ιστορία* in the middle Byzantine period is not conclusive *per se*, without further indications, we must approach the question of the nature of the *Continuation of Theophanes* by using other criteria in order to determine the *genre* of a given historical work.

It is evident that the Continuator relied mostly on written sources for writing their texts. For our edition of the Continuator, Michael Featherstone and I had to consider many possible sources of the anonymous author of the four first books (see the table).³³

³¹ See, for instance, MOSHAMMER, A. A., *Georgius Syncellus. Ecloga chronographica*. Leipzig 1984, 304: *Θουκυδίδης ὁ συγγραφεύς*.

³² It is interesting to note that although Synkellos and Nikephoros based their works on the same *dossier* of historical sources, the first titled his work *ἐκλογὴ χρονογραφίας* and the second *ιστορία σύντομος*. The purpose of the patriarch to use a more learned language (see characteristic 2 below) explains only partly the difference, for both works are to a certain extent derivative and based on a re-writing of previous sources. I think that the fact that Nikephoros did not aim at writing a world-chronicle but chose recent history as a topic may account for the different titles chosen for the works, provided they are original.

³³ By sources we understand historical materials, either in the form of finished books or copied in anthologies or collections of excerpts, but not finished historical works, for the use of this kind of texts would make the task of our historians derivative, a rewriting or actualisation of previous works. TREADGOLD (n. 3) xiii and 138, note 53 wrongly attributes to me the defence of the existence of dossiers of loose notes as a source of Genesis and the Continuator, as Paul Speck argued in many of his publications. In fact, in SIGNES CODOÑER (n. 6) 656–661, I criticised Speck for his ideas about the existence of loose notes as a source of both historians and wrote



that *el pensar en un trabajo con 'fichas' o 'notas' sueltas en el siglo X puede ser una proyección anacrónica de un método de trabajo que hoy en día puede parecer sencillo y natural, pero quizás no lo era por aquel entonces... Contamos con pruebas firmes que descartan la posibilidad de que la fuente común constituyese exclusivamente un conjunto de notas y excerpta copiados en hojas sueltas*. That the common source of Genesis and the Continuator was a compilation or dossier of excerpts taken from previous sources makes sense when we consider that both authors were working under the guidance of the emperor Constantine VII.

Should we in fact forget about these categories and simply call our author an ‘historian’ in the general way Treadgold uses the term? Or should we instead consider him a ‘chronicler’ for his use of written sources? This is what many modern scholars in fact do,³⁴ but if we take into account the Continuator’s use of correct standard Classical Greek and his efforts to construct a narrative for each of the emperors dealt with in his book (see below for characteristics 2 and 3 of our table), the work is miles away from the model of Malalas.

There is perhaps another way to consider the question and it is the real applicability of this first criterion to the *Continuation of Theophanes*. Prokopios, one of the last Byzantine Classical historians before the Dark Centuries, was a “man of action” who was directly involved in the events he describes. But this was not a real advantage for him. In fact, Prokopios faced many problems in finding an argument for his *Wars* because of his critical stance towards Justinian policies until he finally decided to speak about the military campaigns of the imperial armies and remained mostly silent about internal affairs.³⁵ However, in his *Secret History*, never published during his lifetime, Prokopios vented all his frustrations about contemporary matters and made evident for future generations that it was not expedient for an historian to write about the reigning emperor if he wanted to preserve the truth to which he was committed as an historian. For this reason, already in Late Antiquity, other historians preferred to write about past matters of which they were informed through written sources. Against the model of Herodotos, Thukydides, Xenophon or Polybios, who witnessed most of the events they describe, many classicist historians in Late Antiquity acted as professional and competent writers, with a good education and a position at the court, who were able to build up a narrative out of the sources at their disposal. Many of them were in fact jurists (σχολαστικοί) or civil servants at the court, writing on the distant or recent past, such as Sokrates, Sozomenos or Agathias.³⁶

³⁴ HUNGER (n. 15) vol. 1. 339 speaks even of “ein Gruppe von Chroniken”. ROSENQVIST, J. O., *Die byzantinische Literatur. Vom 6. Jahrhundert bis zum Fall Konstantinopels 1453*. Berlin 2007, 72 considers the work a “Chronik” without further explanation.

³⁵ SIGNES CODOÑER, J., Kaiserkritik in Prokops Kriegsgeschichte. In: BRODKA, D. – NIK, J. – SPRAWSKI, S. (eds.), *Freedom and its limits in the Ancient World (=Electrum. Studies in Ancient History 9)*. Krakow 2003, 215–219.

³⁶ VAN NUFFELEN (n. 9) 8–10 questions that Sokrates had in fact studied law and considers that in his case the term σχολαστικός qualified him simply as a learned person. Curiously enough, MAGDALINO (n. 17) 233 notes as *particularly striking* that there is a *series of historians from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries who held high judicial offices: Psellos, Attaleiates, Skylitzes, Zonaras, Choniates and Akropolites*.

This was the model followed by the first Byzantine historians emerging after the Dark Centuries. Already patriarch Nikephoros, who tried to rekindle the classicist history, based his work on a dossier of (mostly) historical sources obtained from George Synkellos, although he could not finish his task as he neither created a continuous narrative nor produced a coherent Attic Greek. The Continuator, working at the court and trying to recover the genre of classicist history, followed the same pattern and worked as a professional clerk writing on the distant past. Autopsy was out of place here and not applicable, as the patron of our writer was in fact the reigning emperor.

As a balance, I would say that Byzantines were not adhering to a twofold division of historiography into ‘histories’ and ‘chronicles’ according to the period of time considered. Obviously, autopsy played a fundamental role for using the word ἱστορία, but the fact that the term χρονογραφία was favoured for referring to historical works dealing with the events of the past does not mean that all these works followed the same standards or methods, as we shall now see in considering the second and third criteria of our table.

4.

The second criterion of our table, language or style,³⁷ has even a bigger grey zone, for as we know, there are many intermediate levels of language between the two poles represented by Prokopios (Atticising language) and Malalas (substandard).³⁸ For instance, a historical work written in a more sober Greek, such as the *Church history* of Sokrates was deemed worthy of rewriting by his later contemporary Sozomenos already in the first half of the 5th century.

What then about middle Byzantine ‘historians’? The Greek of *Continuation of Theophanes* is undoubtedly classical, and it is only some kind of surprise that a scholar such as Steven Runciman writes that the work *was written*,

³⁷ Again, we subsume here into one characteristic the three different ones listed by MAGDALINO (n. 17) 223 for defining the two historical genres. For this scholar, history implies an *elitist/erudite readership, Atticising language, long periods, complex syntax* and displays *frequent classical quotes and allusions, authorial interjections, passages in direct speech*, whereas the chronicle has a *popular readership, a simple, middling to low language, short periods* and a *concise, compressed, matter-of-fact reporting*.

³⁸ TOUFEXIS, N., Diglossia and Register Variation in Medieval Greek. *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 32 (2008) 203–217. The same continuum of language registers was defended by Theodore Markopoulos in his communication “Diglossia in Byzantium” presented on 24th August 2016 at the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies held at Belgrade (summary of the paper on the web page <http://byz2016.rs>).

as were Constantine's own works, in a demotic language akin to the spoken language.³⁹ Certainly, the Continuator avoids the Atticising excesses of a Genesisios, but he seems to have tried to upgrade the level of the Greek of his sources whenever it was considered inadequate for the historical narrative he intended (we can check it in some instances, when the original source has been preserved). Furthermore, as we have pointed out in our edition, the Continuator even imitated passages of authors such as Dionysios of Halicarnassos and Plutarch, as well as of Polybios.⁴⁰ It is the imitation of these models, that is, the intention of Continuator to recover the Ancient Greek prose that puts him on the side of the ancient historians, although he does not reach the heights of a Prokopios.

On the other hand, the fact that the *Continuation* is preserved in just one single manuscript implies a somehow restricted audience for the work, made only popular by the rewriting of Skylitzes in the eleventh century. The audience of *Continuation* cannot be compared either (in terms of success) with the chronicle of George the Monk, written in a low koine.

Therefore, we find in this case differences of level, perhaps even more of style than of language that are difficult to judge against the high Attic standard of a Prokopios. It would therefore be hazardous to classify the work only on the basis of this linguistic evidence if we did not have other criteria at hand. However, considering the efforts made by the Continuator to improve the Greek of his sources and to avoid the delirious excesses of Genesisios, it is clear that he pretended to put his work side by side with the most sober models of Greek Classical prose, although he could perhaps not reach the personal style of Leo the Deacon because he was working under the patronage of an emperor and therefore remained anonymous. As a matter of fact, as he was dealing with the past, his person had no reason to get involved in the narrative. This anonymity, on the other hand, does not put the Continuator on the side of the chronicles of the Logothete group, or even George the Monk or Theophanes (whose work he was supposed to continue), for the language used by all these authors was certainly more substandard and, from the point of view of style, plain and careless. As a balance, we find again a more complex situation than the two-level system of chronicles and histories apparently suggests.

³⁹ RUNCIMAN (n. 14) 63.

⁴⁰ FEATHERSTONE – SIGNES CODOÑER (n. 23) *15. I will deal with this aspect in a forthcoming study.

5.

Let us finally consider the third criterion, narrative.⁴¹ At first sight, the extremes are clear: Prokopios offers a continuous narrative of the events, whereas Malalas is a collection of micro-narratives without any all-embracing argument. However, if we take a closer look, we will soon discover that things are again more complex.

Prokopios produced in fact three different narratives, according to the three different scenarios of the Justinianic wars: Persia, Africa and Gothic Italy. This had somehow the precedent of Appianos' *Roman history*, who dealt separately with the different regions conquered by the Empire. This was for Prokopios an expedient way to skip writing on internal affairs. Nevertheless, when the chance (whichever this was) appeared in 550, our historian did not miss the opportunity to write an acid and extensive report of life at court: the so-called *Secret History*.⁴² As a result, we can say that he constructed several narratives, although the timely frame of the long reign of Justinian gave to all of them the sense of a common relation.

What about Malalas? Let us consider how he deals with recent history in his chronicle. For the imperial period an exact dating is lacking. There are only occasional references to the year or indiction. The text is just a sequence of micro-narratives ordered, certainly, according to a chronological sequence, but without precise chronological references. The sentence that introduces each new narrative is τῷ αὐτῷ χρόνῳ or τῷ αὐτῷ καιρῷ or even ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς βασιλεὺς. For the last part of the chronicle, from Book X onwards, these sequences of micro-narratives are ordered within the reign of the corresponding emperors.⁴³ A reign corresponds to a book or to a part of a book, and begins always with

⁴¹ MAGDALINO (n. 17) 223 gives much importance to narrative as a characteristic of history against the chronicle. For him, history has a *developed, connected, thematic narrative, a biographical structure (imperial reigns are the main units of division) and chronological indications uneven and narrative sequence often thematic rather than chronological*, whereas the chronicle presents *sequential reporting of unrelated and unconnected pieces of information, a chronological structure (information grouped in annual entries)*, and an *exact and sometimes obsessive attention to chronology*.

⁴² For these views see, among others, GREATREX, G., *The Dates of Prokopios' Works. Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 18 (1994) 101–114, SIGNES CODOÑER, J., *Prokops Anekdotia und Justinians Nachfolge. Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 53 (2003) 47–82 and KALDELLIS, A., *The Date and Structure of Prokopios' Secret History and His Projected Work on Church History. Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies* 49 (2009) 585–616.

⁴³ See JEFFREYS, E., *Chronological structures in Malalas' Chronicle*. In: JEFFREYS, E. – CROKE, B. – SCOTT, R., (eds.), *Studies in John Malalas*. Sydney 1990, 111–166, and particularly pp. 138–143 and p. 165.

the sentence: Μετὰ δὲ τὴν βασιλείαν + genitive. Malalas' dealing with Justinian reign differs not much (in this aspect) from the pieced or fragmented narrative of a Theophylaktos Symokattes. The difference is that Symokattes deals only with contemporary history (criterion 1), uses a more learned Greek (criterion 2) and, most important, tries to bridge the gaps between the micro-narratives with transitional phrases. Herewith some examples:⁴⁴

III,6,6: *Since in our narratives we have terminated the story about Aphraates, come then, come and let us plant in the meadows of the history the Roman actions in Suania* (ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸν πρὸς Ἀφραάτην ἀπεπερατώσαμεν λόγον τοῖς διηγήμασιν, φέρε δὴ, φέρε καὶ τὰ περὶ Σουανίαν τοῖς Ῥωμαίοιςπραχθέντα τοῖς τῆς ἱστορίας λειμῶσιν ἐπιφυτεύσωμεν). *For indeed artists who have depicted the larger and more conspicuous elements do not lay aside their masterpiece before they have depicted on their tablets the smallest elements of the whole as well.*

III,8,9: *Since time renews, restamps, and transforms all things, moulding them now this way now that, and bringing change with the revolution of its perpetually moving circuit, tyrannizing the solidity of affairs through the axis of its rotation, constantly dissatisfied and sickened with security, having nowhere to stay its wandering, possessing no fixed abode through the irregular movement of its ebbs and flows, at the present time there befell the Persian kingdom quite incalculable sufferings, which possess a narrative exposition that is not unornamented* (ἐκθεσὶν τε ἀφηγημάτων κεκτημένα οὐκ ἄκοιμνον).

III,9,1: *... for hence we will recount the causes of this ancient Persian war; for thus the pages of the history will be adorned by the completeness of the narrative* (οὕτω γὰρ τῷ ἀπαραλείπτῳ τῶν ἀφηγημάτων οἱ τῆς ἱστορίας ὠραισθήσονται πίνακες)

III,18,4: *Now I have recorded in the earlier passages the subsequent actions of Romans and Persians. Therefore I must return to the continuity of the narrative* (οὐκοῦν ἰτέον ἐπὶ τὰ συνεχῆ τῆς διηγήσεως), *wheeling*

⁴⁴ The English translation is taken from WHITBY, Ml. – WHITBY, MA., *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*. Oxford 1986.

round the history, which is perhaps running a little off course, towards its subsequent and easily perceptible goal, from which in fact we briefly digressed after presenting in public the attendant events connected with Baram at that time. But first let Baram's fatherland and lineage, the stages of his fortune, and his progressive achievements be described in a few words, so that the historical recital may be in all respects harmonious and comprehensive.

On the other hand, the structure of Malalas' chronicle has nothing to do with the absolute annalistic structure of the *Chronicon Paschale*, where each year always has an entry, even if it does not contain any events. As an example, let us consider Olympiads 329, 330, 331 and 332:

τκθ' Ὀλυμπιάς,

Ἰνδ. ιδ'. θ'. ὑπ. Βηλισταρίου μόνου.

Ἰνδ. ιε'. ι'. ὑπ. Βηλισταρίου τὸ β' μόνου.

Ἰνδ. α'. ια'. ὑπ. Ἰωάννου μόνου.

Ἰνδ. β'. ιβ'. ὑπ. Ἀπίωνος, υἱοῦ Στρατηγίου, μόνου.

τλ' Ὀλυμπιάς,

Ἰνδ. γ'. ιγ'. ὑπ. Ἰουστίνου νέου μόνου.

Ἰνδ. δ'. ιδ'. ὑπ. Βασιλείου μόνου.

Ἰνδ. ε'. ιε'. μετὰ ὑπ. Βασιλείου μόνου.

Ἰνδ. ς'. ις'. μετὰ ὑπ. Βασιλείου τὸ β' μόνου.

τλα' Ὀλυμπιάς,

Ἰνδ. ζ'. ιζ'. μετὰ ὑπ. Βασιλείου τὸ γ' μόνου.

Ἰνδ. η'. ιη'. μετὰ ὑπ. Βασιλείου τὸ δ' μόνου.

Ἰνδ. θ'. ιθ'. μετὰ ὑπ. Βασιλείου τὸ ε' μόνου.

Ἰνδ. ι'. κ'. μετὰ ὑπ. Βασιλείου τὸ ς' μόνου.

τλβ' Ὀλυμπιάς,

Ἰνδ. ια'. κα'. μετὰ ὑπ. Βασιλείου τὸ ζ' μόνου.

Ἰνδ. ιβ'. κβ'. μετὰ ὑπ. Βασιλείου τὸ η' μόνου.

Ἰνδ. ιγ'. κγ'. μετὰ ὑπ. Βασιλείου τὸ θ' μόνου.

Ἰνδ. ιδ'. κδ'. μετὰ ὑπ. Βασιλείου τὸ ι' μόνου.

τλγ' Ὀλυμπιάς.

Ἰνδ. ιε'. κε'. μετὰ ὑπ. Βασιλείου τὸ ια' μόνου.

Τούτω τῷ κε' ἔτει τῆς Ἰουστινιανοῦ βασιλείας μετὰ τὴν ὑπατείαν Φλ. Βασιλείου τὸ ια' μόνου γέγονεν ἡ ε' σύνοδος ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει...⁴⁵

As it appears, the author of the *Chronicon Paschale* drew first a chronological frame or grid and then inserted the notices excerpted from his sources in the corresponding pigeonhole. Was it a finished work or just a compilation of historical materials for future use by historians? When he had no sources at his disposal for a series of years, only the bare frame was copied, as in this case. This problem was addressed by Christian Gastgeber in a communication made at Belgrade on 25th August 2016 during the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies, where he suggested that the work could have been *intended to be anonymous, an open data collection with an amended sequence of dates*.⁴⁶ Other possible instrumental works for writing history were the lists of rulers with their ruling years that were copied and transmitted autonomously in the middle Byzantine period, as the *Χρονικὸν σύντομον* attributed to patriarch Nikephoros and other similar works, as the *Vaticanus graecus 2210* of the 10th century with catalogues of Popes of Rome, patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople, kings of Persia, Arab caliphs and Roman emperors.⁴⁷ These lists provided a relative dating of the events and serve as an aid for composing history only if they are combined with chronological tables (*χρονικοὶ κανόνες*) which provide an absolute dating after the model of Eusebius, as the ones found in the *Chronicon Paschale*. A combination or crossing of absolute and relative dates was necessary to produce the grill where the narratives (the 'stories') were inserted. Unfortunately, these chronological tables have been lost for the most part and have no autonomous transmission, as far as they were only instrumental for producing new texts.

In comparison with the *Chronicon Paschale*, Malalas seems to have again followed a middle way similar to that of the chronicle George the Monk, which is usually labelled as a chronicle, despite the lack of precise chronological references. George the Monk arranges the material at his disposal according to reigns, not to years. Each new section begins with the *μετὰ* construction, exactly

⁴⁵ DINDORE, L., *Chronicon Paschale*. Bonn 1832, 634–635.

⁴⁶ For a summary of his paper, see <http://byz2016.rs>.

⁴⁷ See MANGO, C., *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople. Short History*. Washington 1990, 2–4.

as in Malalas. But what about Malalas' working method? He could have first established a sequence of year-entries and then filled each year-entry with the corresponding events extracted from the sources at his disposal. Accordingly, Malalas would have followed a working method similar to that of Theophanes, who puts before each year a rubric with synchronisms, where he refers to the reigns of emperors, caliphs, patriarchs and so on. The difference would not be only one of method, but of final presentation: the final text of Malalas (whether his or the product of a later copyist) would not have included the rubrics.⁴⁸

Things are not so simple, however. In a recent research, Filippo Ronconi established that the oldest manuscript of Theophanes is the *Parisinus Graecus 1710*, which has no rubrics at all. The Latin translation of Theophanes written by Anastasius Bibliothecarius also has no rubrics. Moreover, the *Parisinus Graecus* structures the content of the chronicle by reigning years, exactly as the *Continuation of Theophanes* did.⁴⁹ It cannot be ruled out that rubrics were added to the original text at a later stage.⁵⁰

If we consider the *Continuation of Theophanes* against this background, which of the two models was its author apparently following? Prokopios or Malalas? We appreciate from the very beginning the Continuator's intent to construct big narratives and depart from the segmented and isolated micro-narratives collected in the chronicles. The problem was, of course, to find an appropriate topic under which the author could construct an embracing narrative. This topic could only be provided by the lives of the emperors themselves. In fact, the *Continuation* is not a single work, but a series of five individual works, each of them dealing with a single emperor. The biography and character of each emperor functions as the glue, that sticks all the episodes within each biography. Accordingly, the personality of the emperors is the leitmotiv of each of the books and motivates many of the narrator's comments.

⁴⁸ For an overview on the problems posed by the text of Malalas and the different versions transmitted, see JEFFREYS, E. – CROKE, B. – SCOTT, R., *Transmission of Malalas*. In: JEFFREYS – CROKE – SCOTT (n. 43) 245–267 and, more recently, JEFFREYS, E., *The Manuscript Transmission of Malalas' Chronicle Reconsidered*. In: MEIER – RADTKI – SCHULZ (n. 29) 139–151.

⁴⁹ RONCONI, F., *La première circulation de la «Chronique de Théophane»: notes paléographiques et codicologiques*. In: JANKOWIAK, M. – MONTINARO, F. (eds.), *Studies in Theophanes (Travaux et Mémoires 19)*. Paris 2015, 121–147.

⁵⁰ For this hypothesis, see SIGNES CODOÑER, J., *Theophanes at the Time of Leo VI and JANKOWIAK, M., Framing Universal History: Syncellus' Canon and Theophanes' Rubrics*, both in JANKOWIAK – MONTINARO (n. 49) 53–72 and 159–176.

If we were to summarise this procedure with a few keywords, we would produce the following scheme:⁵¹

Book I: Leo V	rudeness and ferocity
Book II: Michael II	simplicity and ignorance
Book III: Theophilos	fanaticism and intolerance
Book IV: Michael III	depravity
Book V: Basil I	piety and justice

As we see, each of the iconoclastic emperors, plus Michael III, that is, all the emperors before the ascent of Basil I to the throne, have been characterised according to a fixed pattern of his personality, but in a negative way. The most problematic to handle was Theophilos, for the Continuator had at his disposal sources that were very laudatory to the emperor and even presented him as a model of justice.⁵² However, he also managed to produce a model of fanaticism and intolerance for him. In contrast, Basil I is presented as the ideal emperor in Book V. We conclude that these five biographies made sense not independently, but as a collection, as far as the first four were written for preparing the life of Basil I, in which the participation of Constantine VII was most evident: Basil was presented as a model of piety and justice, exactly the virtues the emperor Theophilos was deprived of. Now a new argument was found for history: the contrasting biographies, a procedure followed by Michael Psellos and Michael Attaliates (with the encomia devoted respectively to Michael III Doukas and Nikephoros III Botaneiates at the end of their histories), and also later by other historians, such as Niketas Choniates.

Concerning the chronology, the anonymous Continuator tries to order the events according to a chronological sequence (contrary to Genesios), but no absolute dating is provided, except in a couple of cases, and not even on the occasion of the crowning or death of the emperors. Certainly, in Malalas an exact dating is lacking for the imperial period, but references to the exact year or indiction are more abundant and the sequence of micro-narratives which structure the text are ordered according to a strict chronological pattern. But, in fact, both authors, as well as Theophanes, give much importance to the ordering or structuring of events by reigns of emperors. The main difference is the search for an embracing narrative in the Continuator, which is lacking

⁵¹ For more details about this structure, see SIGNES CODOÑER (n. 6).

⁵² SIGNES CODOÑER (n. 9) 449–460.

in Theophanes and Malalas. This point puts our author in connection with the Classicist historians, rather than with the Chroniclers.

To end this section we should perhaps also consider that between ‘narrative’ and ‘chronology’ there was also a third way to give a structure to historical texts, a way that was practised at the time of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos and was very productive for creating historical treatises: I refer now to the ‘thematisation’ of history, that is, the ordering of historical material according to topics or themes. It is not only the *Historical excerpts* to which I am now referring,⁵³ but also to other works produced by Constantine VII’s time on the basis of historical sources, such as *De thematibus*, *De administrando imperio* or *De ceremoniis*, all of them reflecting the aim of the emperor to address past history as a reservoir of patterns and models for the present.

6. Conclusions

We have checked the bipartite scheme of chronicle and history for the middle Byzantine period (9th to 11th centuries) and have found that the traditional definition of these two genres, inherited from late Antiquity, does not serve to explain the rich and variegated production of historical texts at the time. Should we therefore resign to applying any rigid concept of literary genre to our analysis of Byzantine historiography? Would it not be advisable to carry on our analysis of the texts without paying attention to ‘old’ literary categories that were not followed by Byzantine historians? This is precisely the approach of scholars such as Anthony Kaldellis and Warren Treadgold, who, in their recent contributions to the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies held in Belgrade, do not care about historical genres at all and classify the history according to modern readers’ expectations into good and bad, that is, into reliable and unreliable texts for reconstructing the ‘facts’ and the ‘truth’ modern historians should be interested in.⁵⁴ This is not just a ‘modern’ approach, but one that does not take into account the fact that the Byzantine historians are mostly uninterested in bare events as

⁵³ The reference work is now NÉMETH, A., *Imperial Systematization of the Past. Emperor Constantine VII and his historical excerpts*. (PhD-thesis) Budapest 2010. The author is currently preparing a monograph on the topic where the connections between historiography and the Constantinian excerpts will be addressed.

⁵⁴ TREADGOLD, W., The Unwritten Rules for Writing Byzantine History. In: *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies. Belgrade 22-27 August 2016. Plenary Papers. Belgrade 2016*, 277–292 and KALDELLIS, A., The Manufacture of History in the Later Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Rhetorical Templates and Narrative Ontologies, *ibid.* 293–306.

such, but in models of behaviour, as stressed by Leonora Neville in the same plenary session.⁵⁵

Surely, this indifference in modern scholarship to literary genres is a logical reaction against a narrow definition of historical genres that, as I said at the beginning of this paper, was imposed upon Byzantinists by the Classical philologists. However, modern Byzantine scholars seem to be more papists than Pope, for whereas the Classical Philology is nowadays wholly aware of the changing nature of the genres in Classical Athens, and this in the short span of a century (consider for instance the choirs of the Old Comedy of Aristophanes that are not more present in the New Comedy of Menander scarcely a century later), some Byzantinists still try to apply a single definition of historical writing that should be valid for a period of more than a thousand years! But the fact that any single attempt to look for rigid categories of historical writing for the Byzantine millennium is doomed to fail does not mean that Byzantine historians did not pay attention to literary genres. We must be only aware of the fact that these genres changed over time according to different historical circumstances, and the traditional bipartite classification of the texts into chronicles and histories is not only reductionist, but simply does not work.

As a matter of fact, why should Byzantine historians have relied only on two possibilities when they wrote their texts? In a sense, a comparison can be made with the detailed classification of epideictic speeches made by Menander the Rhetor according to every conceivable situation. If the Byzantines were so attentive to the different genres in oratory,⁵⁶ why would they conform their historical writing to just a simple bipartite scheme, ignoring the wide palette of historical situations to be dealt with? History appears as a repeated leitmotiv in Byzantine historians (and the prologues of their works), but it does not represent perhaps a closed genre (just as Rhetoric was not a single genre), but rather a discipline which informed of the alternative ways of writing historical discourses. This explains why Skylitzes in his proem, when he assessed the historical value of his forerunners, considered all of them as 'historians', but distinguished genres very carefully, as when he said that some authors wrote praises, invectives or encomia (that is, rhetorical treatises) *under the disguise of a history* (ἐν ἱστορίας σχήματι), a criticism we already read in Lucian of Samosata,⁵⁷ or when he uses

⁵⁵ NEVILLE, N., Why Did the Byzantines Write History? In: *Proceedings* (n. 54) 265–276.

⁵⁶ Or also in hagiography, whose different genres are now carefully listed in HINTERBERGER (n. 6).

⁵⁷ In his famous treatise, *How to write history*, Lucian criticises modern contemporaries on several occasions for their confusion between history and encomion. See, for instance, ch. 7 where he says that it is not a narrow isthmus, but a thick wall what separates both genres: οὐ στενὸν τῷ

words such as ἐπιτομή or σύνοψις to refer to the relation of the historical texts to their sources; or when he pays attention to the structure of the works by contrasting the simple enumeration of facts (ἀπαριθμησις) to the elaborate narrative (διήγησις). Accordingly, Byzantine historians seem certainly to have operated with a fixed set of rules, but with freedom and without blind obedience to the ancient models. As Magdalino has put it:

*If, as seems increasingly likely, the authors were conscious of working in a tradition, there is no sign that they felt constrained by precedent: rather it seems that they all chose the structure, style, content, and, level of comment that suited their individual approach to the common task of recording imperial deeds.*⁵⁸

Therefore, we must not encapsulate them into rigid categories, but try to understand their choices and the changes they introduced into the literary tradition in order to give an answer to their medieval audiences, who lived in a world very different from the Greek Antiquity. In fact, the Byzantine themselves could have been conscious that different approaches were needed for different periods, so that they were neither troubled by the fact that the ‘chronicle’ of Theophanes was continued by a ‘history’ such as the one composed by the Continuator, nor by the composition of a panegyric of the reigning emperor instead of a more objective representation of the emperor’s biography.⁵⁹ Other approaches of history were also hagiography (we mentioned above the lives of the Patriarchs) or narrative poetry (consider the poem on the capture of Crete by Theodosios Diakonon), but they are related to history by their content (they are indeed valuable historical *sources* from the modern point of view), not by their genre.

It is with all these considerations in mind that I suggest the following scheme that is based in the evidence of the three centuries I have considered and must not be automatically extended to the previous and later periods, where the writing of history faced other problems and, accordingly, found other literary ways to be expressed. Original chronicles, for instance, do not appear after

ἰσθμῷ διώρισται καὶ διατετέιχιστα ἡ ἱστορία πρὸς τὸ ἐγκώμιον, ἀλλὰ τι μέγα τεῖχος ἐν μέσῳ ἔστιν αὐτῶν.

⁵⁸ MAGDALINO (n. 17) 227.

⁵⁹ For this conscious separation of genres in Psellos’ history, see SIGNES CODOÑER, J., Retórica, biografía y autobiografía en la historia: algunas consideraciones sobre géneros literarios en la Cronografía de Miguel Pselo. In: VALCÁRCEL, V. (ed.), *La Biografías griega y latina como género literario. De la Antigüedad al Renacimiento*. (Anejos de Veleia 26) Vitoria 2009, 175–206.

the 12th century, for most of them (I speak of the big chronicles, not of the *chronica minora*) are derivative (see for instance the recently edited chronicle of Theodoros Skoutariotes).⁶⁰ According to Magdalino, from the 10th century onwards *there is not one (work) that combines all the criteria in the 'chronicle' checklist, while nearly all of them show certain characteristics of the 'history' type*.⁶¹ In fact, we can add that chronistic writing was increasingly less popular after the 12th century, probably because readers already had at their disposal a good deal of world chronicles written in the previous centuries and no need was felt for producing new versions, except if they presented some formal novelty, as the chronicle of Constantine Manasses, written in political verses. As the Church histories of Late Antiquity, world chronicles had ceased to represent mainstream historiography in the later Byzantine centuries. We must, I repeat, avoid considering every classification of historical genres as valid for the whole Byzantine millennium.

Accordingly, the scheme below is only a basis for future discussion, which should and must be enriched with a more detailed analysis of the works considered here and also of other texts of the period which have not come to us but of which we have some references.⁶² Many of them, as the ones listed in the proem of Skylitzes, are, as argued above, close to rhetorical genres. I pay attention in the classification not only to the **chronological** or **narrative** structure that is traditionally the *conditio sine qua non* of historical writing, but also to the **thematic** structure that is the criterion that guides the production of many antiquarian works at the time of Constantine Porphyrogenetos. I provide only a general characterisation of the texts, without considering the specificities of individual works, which combine different approaches:⁶³

⁶⁰ TOCCI, R., *Theodori Scutariotae Chronica*. (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 46) Berlin 2015.

⁶¹ MAGDALINO (n. 17) 225.

⁶² For instance the 9th century *ιστορία* of Theognostos, about which TREADGOLD (n. 3) 78–90 speculates beyond the actual evidence.

⁶³ For another classification of the historical works which takes into account Latin models, see BURGESS – KULIKOWSKI (n. 29) 112–114, who distinguish between 1) classicising narrative histories, 2) chronicles (*Chronicon Paschale*, Theophanes, *Kleinchroniken*), 3) chronographs (*Χρονογραφείον σύντομον*), 4) annotated chronographs (George Synkellos), 5) universal breviaria (Malalas, George the Monk, Symeon the Logothete etc.) and 6) compact epitomes (Nikephoros' *Χρονογραφικὸν σύντομον*).

Short definition	Titles given	Characteristics	Examples
1) Instrumental works (or material for writing history)	χρονικὸν σύντομον, χρονικοὶ κανόνες	Chronological lists of rulers or chronological tables	[Chronicon Paschale?], Nikephoros' <i>Short chronicle</i>
2) Original works			
2.1) Histories of the present	ἱστορία (or χρονογραφία)	Classical Greek, reigns of emperors used as a narrative structure, predominant autopsy	Leo the Deacon, Michael Psellos, Michael Attaleiates
2.2) Histories of the (recent) past	χρονογραφία, (or ἱστορία)	Classical Greek, reigns of emperors used as a narrative structure, use of written sources	Genesios, Theophanes Continuatus
2.3) Histories of the distant past = World chronicles	χρονικὸν, ἐκλογή χρονογραφίας, χρονογραφία	Koine Greek, history beginning with the creation, predominant chronological structure, use of written sources including works of categories 2.1 and 2.2	George Synkellos + Theophanes, George the Monk, Logothete (version A)

Short definition	Titles given	Characteristics	Examples
2.4) Histories of the past	φιλοπόνημα σύνταγμα	Koine Greek, predominant thematic structure, use of written sources including works of categories 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3	<i>Excerpta Historica</i> <i>De thematibus</i> <i>De administrando imperio</i> <i>De ceremoniis</i>
3) Derivative works Breviaries of histories of the (recent or distant) past [but also including original <i>continuationes</i> , to be included in 2.3]	ιστορία σύντομος σύνοψις ιστοριῶν, ἐπιτομή ιστορίας	Rewriting (mostly summary, but also interpolation) of works of category 2	Nikephoros' <i>Short history</i> , Psellos', <i>Short history</i> , Logothete (version B), Pseudo-Symeon, John Skylitzes, John Zonaras

Inhaltsverzeichnis

Vorwort.....	11
Peter Schreiner	
Byzantinische Literatur und lateinische Literatur des Mittelalters: Ein Vergleich im Überblick (500/600–1200)	13
Hermann Harrauer	
Der Alltag eines Papyrologen	29
Pia Carolla	
Priscus of Panion, John Malalas and the <i>Chronicon Paschale</i> (CP): a Complex Relationship	51
Laura Carrara	
Die Alleinherrschaft Justinians in der Chronik des Malalas und im <i>Chronicon Paschale</i> : Eine Quellenstudie	71
Vlastimil Drbal	
Das andere Bild des byzantinischen Palästinas: Das nicht-christliche Pilgerwesen in Palästina zwischen dem 4. und 7. Jh.....	95
Nicolas Drocourt	
Au nez et à la barbe de l'ambassadeur. Cheveux, poils et pilosité dans les contacts diplomatiques entre Byzance et l'Occident (VI ^e -XII ^e s.).....	107
Emese Egédi-Kovács	
Quelques remarques sur la langue de la traduction française dite d'Ivion de <i>Barlaam et Josaphat</i> (ms. Athon. Ivion 463).....	135
Péter Ekler	
Findings on the Text of the Bessarion Corvina Codex (Budapest, National Széchényi Library, Cod. Lat. 438).....	143
Erika Elia	
Die Methoden eines Kopisten des 16. Jahrhunderts und die Abschriften des <i>Chronicon Paschale</i>	149
Zoltán Farkas	
Byzantine Studies in Eötvös József Collegium	163
Olivier Gengler	
Johannes Malalas und seine Quellen: Überlegungen zum Fall Philostratos (Malalas XII 26)	175

Erika Juhász	
Bemerkungen zu den Konsullisten in der Osterchronik	187
Tamás Mészáros	
Laonikos on the Ethnonyms of the Hungarians	195
Bojana Pavlović	
Nikephoros Gregoras und das Nikänische Reich	203
Juan Signes Codoñer	
Dates or Narrative? Looking for Structures in Middle Byzantine Historiography (9 th to 11 th Century).....	227
Vratislav Zervan	
Konnte Nikephoros Kallistou Xanthopoulos lateinisch? (Zum Gebrauch der lateinischen Lehnwörter in der Kirchengeschichte).....	257
Verzeichnis der bisher erschienenen Bände der Editionsreihe	
„Antiquitas • Byzantium • Renascentia“	273

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Zoltán Farkas, László Horváth und Tamás Mészáros

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